

independent audit of House operations, something inconceivable in the recent past.

We are committed to regular audits in the future, just like any other institution. It is embarrassing to realize that the executive branch instituted regular audits the year I was born.

Congress in the past has betrayed the public trust. Now we have to ask, and we must ask, to get that public trust back and to earn it back. An audit is one way of doing that. We must push reforms to the next level. We have already instituted a number of the recommendations made by the Price Waterhouse firm that did the auditing. We need to evaluate the remainder of those.

This audit is one of the best indications of real change in the Congress. People sent us here to change government, and we are doing it.

With this audit, Congress has taken steps toward credibility with the American people. Congress must operate in the open. As we legislate openness and accountability for private companies and public institutions, we have to obey these principles ourselves. The old Congress didn't obey these rules.

The auditors found in the last Congress a shocking disregard for financial control, for institutional management, and just pure common sense.

For example, the audit showed that some of the Members overspent their allowances for staff salaries, office expenses, and official mail. It showed Members being paid twice for their travel expenses. If Congress were a business, an auto repair shop, a farm, a bank, well, by the auditors' own statements, they would not be able to get a loan and they would be bankrupt. If it was a public institution, it would have been violating laws since 1990.

It is time that these practices end, and today we finally had the audit that came forward with the information to open the closet doors. This is only a start. We have to continue these reforms. We have to continue to open this body up to the people so that they can look and see and hear and learn what all is taking place.

This is taxpayer dollars, and this is how the people's decisions are being made. We need to continue to open that up. I am very proud that this first big step was taken today, to open up, and now we have to continue to push this forward. We have to aggressively pursue those things that are put forward in this audit to be able to clean up the People's House.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear of this audit coming forward, and I think the American people will be most interested in its findings.

ADMINISTRATION ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY TOBACCO INDUSTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. JONES] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Bill Clinton and Dr. Kessler at the FDA did not get the message of the November 8th elections.

The American people do not want more regulations and more government in their lives. They want far less intrusion and far less regulation.

This latest attempt by the administration to destroy the tobacco industry, through a regulatory power grab, is unprecedented and unwarranted.

It is ironic to me, that the Clinton administration wants to classify nicotine as a drug. I think the administration should spend their time and money fighting the illegal drug trade, that is destroying this country instead of being so concerned about a legal product which has been used since the founding of this country.

The Federal Government has consistently used tobacco as their whipping boy, first trying to finance their big government health care plan on the backs of tobacco and now by trying to regulate them to death.

Let me make it clear, no tobacco farmer or tobacco company is encouraging young people to smoke. As a matter of fact the tobacco industry has established programs to encourage young people not to smoke. In many States, it is illegal to sell cigarettes to minors.

The Clinton administration view is that they know what is best for the American people. They believe that Government has an obligation to be our big brother.

This is big brother at its worst. What next, prohibition of alcohol, caffeine, chocolate?

Ladies and gentlemen, adults over 18 make responsible decisions on caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol every day.

The Government has no business in those decisions and the FDA and Commissioner have no authority to classify nicotine as a drug.

The courts have consistently stated that the FDA has no authority to regulate cigarettes and it is time that Kessler end this witch hunt on the tobacco industry and the tobacco farmer.

If Bill Clinton and Dr. Kessler had ever held a real job, they would understand the struggle that family farmers face.

They would understand that the tobacco farmer has to fight the elements and that most farmers work within a small financial margin.

Congress has already levied numerous taxes on tobacco making the farmers' life even more difficult and his ability to make a profit even slimmer.

Again, I call on the administration to stop the witch hunt of the tobacco industry and tobacco farmers and get on with the business of downsizing Government, reducing the debt, and implementing the mandate of the November 8th elections.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Ms. BROWN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. BROWN of Florida addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. FORBES] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. FORBES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

FIRST AUDIT EVER OF THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCINNIS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. HAYWORTH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, when I return home to the Sixth District of Arizona and visit with my constituents and talk to them about various issues confronting this body and this Nation, the question always arises: What are you in the Congress doing to take the lead? What differences have you made by example?

Today in this Congress, we reaffirm one of those examples with the announcement of the privately conducted audit of this institution, the first ever, the first in its history finally being completed.

Unfortunately, some of the worst fears of the American people have been confirmed with this report. Because you see, Price Waterhouse, the independent accounting firm with whom we contracted to do the audit, said that the records were so poorly kept that they could not even make an accurate assessment of the problem. What a terrible indictment of the old order, that this, the people's House, had fallen into such disrepair in terms of balancing the ledger books, in terms of keeping track of your money, that the independent accounting firm could not even issue any type of evaluation or accurate opinion. In accounting parlance the worst possible evaluation.

The audit is rife with examples. The House Finance Office, an office which processes \$700 million a year in salary and expense checks using handwritten ledgers to keep records. Here in the information age, as we brought the House of Representatives on line and on the Internet through Thomas, as we look to the technological advancements in the computer age, and still in this institution handwritten records. The opportunities for abuse were plentiful. The audit notes bills were paid late, appropriations limits ignored. Little accounting for the property and equipment belonging to this, the people's House, and with the computer program and the computer system that does exist, significant security problems.

Now, be forewarned: It is almost impossible in the course of 6 or 7 months to take this institution and automatically put it on the right track. Certainly more remains to be done, and